

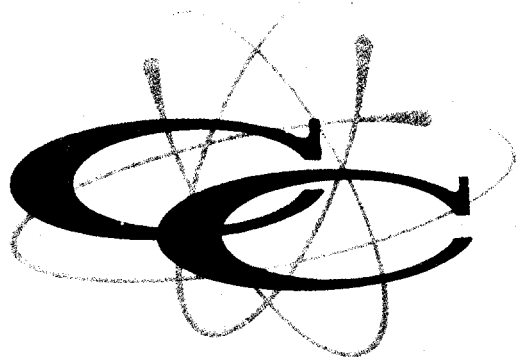
OAK RIDGE  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
1400 OAK RIDGE TURNPIKE • OAK RIDGE, TENNESSEE 37830 • PHONE 615-483-1321

Presentation for the  
Joint Hearing before  
the Subcommittee on Energy Research and Production  
and  
the Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight  
on

"The Impact of Mercury Releases at the Oak Ridge Complex"

*ChemRisk Document No. 1834*

Oak Ridge, Tennessee  
July 11, 1983  
by  
Jeffrey Ginsburg, President  
Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce



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### Statement from the Oak Ridge Chamber of Commerce

This organization represents most of the business and professional people in Oak Ridge, many of whom have lived in this immediate area for several years. Few of us have technical training, but we have a unique and important perspective on this issue.

Our members --- as well as nearly all of the residents in Oak Ridge --- are vitally concerned about the information that 2.4 million pounds of mercury were unaccounted for during operations at the local federal plants some 20 to 30 years ago.

To add a bit of historical prospective to these proceedings, D.O.E. and its predecessors, E.R.D.A. and A.E.C., and their contractors, have been a dominant influence from the beginning. Together, they have taken on and successfully completed vital, complex projects involving billions of dollars of public monies without a hint of fiscal impropriety.

In many of those years they operated under a mandate of secrecy with only Congress providing oversight. At the time of the major mercury releases there were very different priorities than today when high environmental standards are the rule. Then they were trying to accomplish a project vital to national security with all possible haste and without today's concern for the environment.

However, this is both our home and where we have invested our time, efforts, and money to earn a living and live with our families. We do want to know what effect it may have in the future.

We commend Representative Lloyd and Representative Gore for conducting these hearings so promptly. It is an important step in providing necessary information.

We are concerned and we are carefully watching developments, but we are just that - concerned - not in a state of panic or hysteria. Nor are we naive. We have lived here for many years and since the mercury releases, we are aware of no special health problems. Nor have a cross section of local physicians detected any mercury-related problems, as reported in a story in The Oak Ridger. Studies conducted to date seem to indicate that there is no special health problem and we hope this proves true as further studies are made.

We have been pleased with the attitude and the actions of the Oak Ridge Operations Office of the Department of Energy since the information was released. They have given every indication of concern equal to ours by being open, cooperative with all interested parties and willing to do anything possible to determine what the effects might be.

Just as we should not judge what was done 20 to 30 years ago by today's standards, neither should we allow the secrecy and security of that era to linger in today's world.

We think it proper and necessary to point out that, no matter the cause, the reason for this hearing again points up the problems which accrue to the community in what is, essentially, a one-company government town. The town was built to serve the three major federal plants here. Yet, since incorporation in 1959, it has always been the government's plan to sever the in-lieu-of-tax payments to the community and Roane and Anderson Counties: that the community should become "self-sufficient". Tremendous local efforts have been maintained to attract new industries, businesses, residents. Successes have been minimal.

Your mandate seems clear. First, to find the facts about any health problems which may exist due to the operations of the plants here. Second, erase problems that exist, if there actually are any, with a thorough clean-up program. Third, insure that in the future the community will have all facts that might affect living conditions in this area as a result of any operations at the federal facilities here.

Based on our long standing working relationship with D.O.E. and its predecessors, E.R.D.A. and A.E.C., and the available technical expertise in the Oak Ridge facilities, we are confident that this problem can and will be properly addressed.